

Grave surprise of Johnathan Davis allegations has serious implications

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■ ACT Greens leader Shane Rattenbury makes a statement regarding serious allegations raised against Greens MLA Johnathan Davis.

The written agreement between the Greens and Labor says they will act in good faith. And there will be no surprises.

But on Friday, Labor was dealt the biggest surprise of the term.

The coalition's major party found out the Greens' Johnathan Davis was under investigation over allegedly having sex with a minor and an improper relationship with an older teenager.

One allegation may amount to criminal behaviour, though no complainant has come forward to police. The other is not, on the face of it, illegal, but out of step with community and party expectations for an elected representative.

Greens Leader Shane Rattenbury had known about the allegations since Monday. A senior member of Mr Rattenbury's staff was tasked with investigating. On Thursday, he had stood down Mr Davis from all his responsibilities, another sign of how serious the allegations were.



📷 Shane Rattenbury, right, with Johnathan Davis in October 2020. Picture by Sitthixay Ditthavong

Mr Rattenbury, who as Attorney-General, is the ACT's first law officer, has a particular obligation to uphold the rights and interests of complainants. His actions in this matter will be heavily scrutinised, and rightfully so.

Chief Minister Andrew Barr was informed of the allegations on Friday morning, after *The Canberra Times* had contacted Mr Rattenbury's office on Thursday night seeking comment on the investigation. Greens staff were informed on Friday.

Would the public have been any the wiser were it not for media reporting on Friday?

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How long did the Greens believe they could indefinitely stand down Mr Davis without informing either the public or their coalition partner? Would Mr Davis have simply resigned, no questions asked? They're tough questions the Greens should answer in coming days.

While the investigation is a sensitive matter, this delay will prove corrosive for the relationship between the Greens and Labor, even if it was well-intentioned. The relationship has already been pressure-tested in the lead-up to the next election, due in a little less than a year.

Mr Davis' position in the Legislative Assembly is seen to be untenable. His resignation is expected to be announced in the coming days. The scrubbing of Mr Davis' social media accounts on Friday is not a sign he'll stick around.

The revelations have genuinely shocked the members and staff in the Legislative Assembly. The usual atmosphere of well-intentioned political sparring gave way on Friday, replaced instead with shock, concern and sadness.

The allegations against Mr Davis are grave and the ramifications for all involved are very serious. Personally and politically.